

STATE OF MAINE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 96-900

October 14, 1998

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
NYNEX School and Library Project

ORDER

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT and DIAMOND, Commissioners

I. SUMMARY

In this Order, we approve a Circuit Rider Program as proposed by the Maine School and Library Network Advisory Board on October 8, 1998.

II. DISCUSSION

On August 4, 1998, we directed the Advisory Board to prepare a plan to implement a "circuit rider" service to address problems and training at individual school and library sites. Frederic Pease v. New England Telephone and Telegraph Co. d/b/a NYNEX, Docket No. 94-254 (Aug. 4, 1998). The Advisory Board approved a proposal and preliminary budget at its October 7, 1998 Board Meeting. That proposed is incorporated as Attachment 1 to this Order.

After reviewing the Proposal we find that it addresses the needs we identified in our August Order. The circuit riders will be experts in software, hardware and training issues. They will diagnose the source of problems and provide technical information to address those problems. The purpose of this assistance is to foster technological independence.

We approve the proposal and spending up to \$400,000 over the next 18 months. Given that the budget figures are preliminary, Bell Atlantic should submit proposed contracts with circuit rider contractors to the Commission staff for review prior to entering into final contracts. We also expect the Advisory Board to continue its oversight of this process.

Accordingly, we

O R D E R

1. That Bell Atlantic may spend up to \$400,000 for the Circuit Rider Program described in Attachment 1 to this Order.

Dated at Augusta, Maine, this 14th day of October, 1998.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Dennis L. Keschl
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch
 Nugent
 Diamond

NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO REVIEW OR APPEAL

5 M.R.S.A. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party to an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to review or appeal of its decision made at the conclusion of the adjudicatory proceeding. The methods of review or appeal of PUC decisions at the conclusion of an adjudicatory proceeding are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 1004 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R.110) within 20 days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which reconsideration is sought.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within 30 days of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 73 et seq.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (5).

Note:The attachment of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the particular document may be subject to review or appeal. Similarly, the failure of the Commission to attach a copy of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the document is not subject to review or appeal.

Circuit Rider Proposal

10/8/98

The Circuit Rider Mission

Provide advice and assistance by phone, email and in person to resolve local technical problems that preclude the fullest possible utilization of MSLN services.

The Circuit Rider effort will...

- Focus on the sites with the most serious problems and with fewest local resources to deal with those problems.
- Foster locally sustainable use of MSLN and avoid ongoing technical dependence on Circuit Riders.
- Closely integrate Circuit Rider efforts with those of end-user training contractors, MSL and DOE.

Tasks Included in Circuit Rider Mission

The following is a *non-exhaustive* list of tasks MSLN Circuit Riders will be expected to perform and may be extended or modified by the MSLN Advisory Board:

1. Evaluate a site's network environment (NOS version, wiring plant), MSLN connectivity and workstation configuration (OS version, memory, disk storage, processor speed) and make recommendations for optimizing it for MSLN access.
2. Install, upgrade, configure and/or optimize commonly used Internet client software, as necessary, and in the process instruct local staff in why and how this work is done.
3. Configure and demonstrate configuration of staff email accounts on the shared MSLN email server.
4. Configure and demonstrate configuration of mechanisms for posting pages to the shared MSLN web server using WS-FTP and/or Netscape Gold / Composer."
5. Provide advice on bandwidth optimization techniques as appropriate to a given site, e.g. caching proxy servers.
6. Review with site staff a checklist of steps that will lead toward local technical self-sufficiency.
7. Instruct site staff briefly and only as necessary in the basics of client software use and MSLN connection management.
8. Provide advice on considerations associated with creating local email, file and web servers.

Tasks Excluded from Circuit Rider Mission

There are a wide variety of local needs related to computing and telecommunications that, though worthy, from its rulings the PUC appears not to support. The following is a list of examples of tasks that we understand to be excluded from support by this Circuit Rider effort:

1. Installation and/or configuration of a local email, file or web server.
2. Design of Local area networks.
3. Wiring for or installation of a local area network.

4. Creation of web pages.
5. Any but the most narrowly MSLN-related modification of local area network configuration settings.
6. General training in computer use unrelated to MSLN.
7. General training in use of the Internet in education or provision of library services.

Organizational Strategy

Circuit Rider staff will be provided under contract between Bell Atlantic and the three current providers of end-user training (Northern Maine Technical College, University of Maine, University of Southern Maine). Operational management of circuit rider activities will be the joint responsibility of the Department of Education and the Maine State Library. Circuit rider activities will be carried out in close consultation with UNET Network Operations Center staff. Full oversight will be exercised by the MSLN Advisory Board.

Procedures for the maintenance of full records of Circuit Rider activities will be developed. They will include lists of sites visited and/or assisted by phone, descriptions of problems encountered and how they were dealt with, detailed information on time utilization, etc.

In order to begin work as soon as possible, the Circuit Rider effort will begin with three individuals and expand as necessary thereafter.

Requirements for Circuit Rider Staff

Individuals contracted to serve as circuit riders should demonstrate, along with additional capabilities defined by the MSLN Advisory Board, at least:

1. Thorough understanding of Internet, WAN and LAN concepts, technologies, products and practices.
2. Extensive hands-on experience in configuring Internet client software.
3. Strong skills in diagnosis and resolution of computer and network problems.
4. Outstanding communication skills, both in person and on the phone, with emphasis on ability to work productively and harmoniously with school and library staff from a wide variety of professional and technical backgrounds.
5. Willingness to learn more about school and library environments and to adjust accordingly in dealing with staff at MSLN sites.

These additional elements would be highly desirable in a Circuit Rider:

1. Work experience with computing and/or networks in a library or school environment.
2. Hands-on experience with as many as possible of the following: Microsoft networks (WFWG, Win 9x, Win NT) Novell 3.x, Novell 4.x, Appletalk, Localtalk, Ethernet for PCs, Ethernet for Macs.

Eligibility for Circuit Rider Assistance

With a small number of Circuit Riders, the problems to which they may direct their attention are limited. Circuit Rider assistance will be provided based on the following criteria, in decreasing order of importance:

1. Site is completely unable to use MSLN connection in any way.
2. MSLN connection works only intermittently.
3. MSLN connection is significantly slower than would be expected given the number of computers attached to it.
4. MSLN connection is okay, but one or more of the following services are not operating properly: web browsing, utilization of the shared MSLN email server, utilization of the shared MSLN web server, FTP capability, telnet capability.
5. MSLN performance is slow with a significant number of computers attached. Site staff seeks advice on optimizing bandwidth available.
6. MSLN client software is out-of-date and no one locally knows how to upgrade it.
7. Other MSLN-related problems.

Sites in need of assistance will be identified by these means:

1. Remote statistical monitoring by UNET will identify sites with very little or no MSLN activity. Circuit Riders will contact these sites by phone to determine the reasons for the lack of activity. Appropriate action will be taken by phone or by site visit to resolve any problems within the purview of the Circuit Rider program.
2. A mailing to all MSLN sites will explain the Circuit Rider program and ask sites needing assistance to return a form explaining the nature of connectivity difficulties. The
3. Circuit Riders in consultation with MSL and DOE will prioritize the problems that are reported and the Circuit Riders will take action to deal with them.
4. DOE and MSL will solicit similar responses by means of the MELIBS-L and MIEC-L listservs as well as newsletters and other mailings to MSLN institutions.
5. MSL and DOE staff will be directed to make referrals -- to call to the attention of the Circuit Riders any site that appears to be in need of assistance.
6. Circuit Riders will call sites judged to be more likely to be having difficulties (smaller sites, sites that haven't responded to other efforts to make contact) and attempt to determine how things are going and whether any assistance is needed.
7. MSLN trainers, subscribers to the MSLNTC-L listserv and UNET and Bell Atlantic support staff will be asked to make referrals -- to call to the attention of the Circuit Riders any site that appears to be in need of assistance.

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET (18 MONTHS)
CIRCUIT RIDER PROGRAM**

Staff

3 computer professionals @ \$40,000 per year	\$180,000	
25% for benefits	45,000	
15% overhead for support by USM, UMO, NMTC	45,000	
		\$ 224,000

Travel

90,000 miles @ \$.24 per mile	\$ 21,600	\$ 21,600
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Telecommunications

3 Cell Phones leases and monthly usage (\$200 per month contract)	\$10,800	
Outgoing toll calls (10¢ a minute 1 hr per day 63 weeks)	5,700	
		\$ 16,500

Equipment and Software

Start-Up. 3 laptops, 3 portable inkjet printer, software, (purchase or lease which ever more cost effective)	\$ 15,000	
Software license for remote control diagnostic software to be installed in 50 sites @ \$60/site	3,000	
Diagnostic software for each circuit rider	3,000	\$ 21,000

Miscellaneous

Printing costs, mailing costs, supplies, acquisition of video, training materials appropriate to site needs	20,000	\$ 20,000
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TOTAL	<u>\$349,100</u>
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